

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ADDIS 08670 221040Z

12
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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R 220705Z JUL 76
FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO AMCONSUL ASMARA
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 0306

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 8670

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS
SUBJECT: BRITISH JOURNALIST, JON SWAIN

1. BRITISH COUNSELOR OF EMBASSY ROBER BARLTROP CALLED ON CHARGE JULY 21 TO ACQUAINT HIM WITH FACTS AS BRITISH KNOW THEM SURROUNDING DISAPPEARANCE OF BRITISH JOURNALIST JON SWAIN OF LONDON SUNDAY TIMES. BARLTROP ALSO ASKED IF WE WOULD INFORM OUR CONGEN IN ASMARA AND ASK CONGEN TO KEEP EARS OPEN FOR ANY NEWS OF SWAIN THAT MIGHT COME TO CONGEN'S ATTENTION. CHARGE AGREED TO DO SO.

2. ACCORDING BARLTROP, SWAIN ARRIVED IN ADDIS IN EARLY JUNE FROM LONDON VIA DAMASCUS WHERE HE WAS IN CONTACT WITH ELF AND WAS GIVEN AN ELF LAISSEZ PASSER. PRESUMPTION IS THAT HE INTENDED DO SOME KIND OF STORY ON ERITREAN INSURGENTS. HIS ORIGINAL INTENTION WAS TO ENTER ETHIOPIA AT ASMARA FROM KHARTOUM BUT IN FACT HE CAME STRAIGHT TO ADDIS. ENTERED ETHIOPIA ON TOURIST PASSPORT, DID NOT INFORM EPMG HE WAS JOURNALIST, AND THEREFORE WAS NOT ACCREDITED.

3. HE DECLARED AN INTENTION TO VISIT MAKALE AND AXSUM TO BRITISH EMBASSY HERE AND WAS ADVISED AGAINST GOING, PARTICULARLY TO MAKALE. AFTER TELLING BRIT EMBASSY THAT HE WOULD TAKE THEIR ADVICE RE MAKALE, HE NONETHELESS FLEW TO MAKALE ON JUNE 11. HE WAS MANIFESTED ON A FLIGHT TO AXSUM JUNE 12, BUT ACCORDING TO ETHIOPIAN SOURCES, DID NOT
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CHECK INTO HOTEL THERE UNTIL JUNE 14. NOTHING IS KNOWN

OF HIS MOVEMENTS DURING INTERIM. ON JUNE 15 HE LEFT HOTEL
IN AXSUM WITH HIS BAGGAGE AND HAS NOT BEEN HEARD FROM SINCE.

4. MEANWHILE HE DID NOT CHECK OUT OF HIS ADDIS HOTEL.
WHEN BRITS EVENTUALLY CHECKED HIS ROOM, THEY FOUND CANVAS-
THPE BAG WITH DRIED FOODS, HIS JOURNALISTIC NOTES COMPILED
AS RESULT OF HIS TIME SPENT IN ADDIS BEFORE GOING TO TIGRE
PROVINCE, AND THREE PIECES OF ELF PROPAGANDA.

5. BRITS HAVE BEEN IN TOUCH WITH EPMG WHICH PROVIDED
INFO OF SWAIN'S MOVEMENTS IN TIGRE, BUT APPARENTLY HAVE
NOT TOLD EPMG WHOLE STORY. BRITS HAVE NUMBER OF THEORIES
OF SWAIN'S PRESENT WHEREABOUTS, INCLUDING POSSIBILITY HE
IS IN EPMG HANDS, OR IS DEAD FOLLOWING SHIFTA (BANDIT)
ACTIVITY, OR IS IN INSURGENT HANDS EIGHET WILLINGLY OR
UNWILLINGLY. THEY HAVE NO EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT ANY OF
ONE OF THEORIES, HOWEVER. THEORIES ARE COMPLICATED BY
EVIDENCE THAT SWAIN APPARENTLY INTENDED RETURN TO ADDIS
FOLLOWING HIS TIGRE VISIT.

6. ASMARA ACTION. FOREGOING IS TO ALERT YOU TO SWAIN'S
DISAPPEARANCE. DO NOT BELIEVE YO SHOULD TAKE ANY
INITIATIVE IN ASKING QUESTIONS UNLESS DEPT INSTRUCTS
OTHERWISE, BUT WOULD APPRECIATE ANYTHING YOU MAY HEAR
THAT WE CAN PASS ON TO BRIT EMBASSY.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INVESTIGATIONS, JOURNALISTS, TERRORISTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 JUL 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976ADDIS08670
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760282-0168
From: ADDIS ABABA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760734/aaaabdkz.tel
Line Count: 87
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <19 MAY 2004 by buchant0>; APPROVED <09 SEP 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BRITISH JOURNALIST, JON SWAIN
TAGS: PINS, OTRA, UK, ET, (SWAIN, JON)
To: ASMAR
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006